

Introduction

In the oil and gas industry, testing is a very big issue. All of the well control equipment has to be tested on a regular basis. There are chamber tests, flow tests, function tests, and pressure tests. There are specified times that these tests must be done, such as initial tests and subsequent tests. Some tests must be done daily, some weekly, and others not to exceed twenty-one days. There is a specific purpose for test. The purpose of an equipment test is to make sure that it is in proper working condition. There are also tests or drills for the crews which must be conducted. One drill is the reaction drill. The contractor supervisor simulates a change in the pit levels and the operator supervisor observes the driller to see if he responds to the change in pit level. If he does, then the operator supervisor tells him that it is only a test and not to shut the well in. The purpose of that test is to see if the driller is alert, is monitoring his pits, and takes the correct action to the change in pit volume.

The scriptures are full of tests. The word test or a form of it is used 84 times in the Bible. The Hebrew word for test used in Genesis 22:1 is *nasah* (Strong's H5254), and it is used 40 times. Most of the scriptures that talk about tests refer to God testing His people. We are cautioned against testing God. In Deuteronomy 6:16, we are commanded not to put the Lord your God to the test.

(Deut 6:16) "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah."

But, God's people often tested God. In Numbers 14:22, God said, "*Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice.*" He said they had tested Him ten times and did not listen to His voice. Here are just a few of those times. In Psalm 78:18, it says that they put God to the test by asking for food according to their desire. It goes on to say that again and again they tempted (tested) God, and pained the Holy One of Israel.

(Ps 78:18, 41) "And in their heart they put God to the test By asking food according to their desire....{41} Again and again they tempted God, And pained the Holy One of Israel."

There is exception to this in Scripture and that is found in Malachi 3. God's people had not been bringing in the whole tithe, and so God told them to bring the whole tithe in and test Him. He said He would open up windows of heaven and pour out a blessing for them, and rebuke the devourer. There was a lady at another church that I pastored that did not tithe. I encouraged her to tithe and test God in the matter. So, she began tithing, and immediately afterwards, her ex-husband gave her a call and asked her how much money she owed. He sent her a check for a large sum of money and paid off all her debt. She had tested God and He did exactly what He promised He would do in Malachi.

(Mal 3:10-11) "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. {11} Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes," says the LORD of hosts."

Like the tests in the oil and gas industry, they all have a purpose. In Exodus 15:25-26, God tested the people at Marah to see if they were going to do what is right and keep His commandments and statutes. In Exodus 16:4, God tested them again in the wilderness of Sin to see if they were going to walk in His instruction. Some did, but some did not pass the test, and did not walk in His instructions. In Exodus 20:20, God wanted to teach them to fear Him so that they would not sin. Therefore, He tested them by sending thunder, lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet. Moses told them not to fear, for it was just a test.

In Deuteronomy 8:2, God led His people in the wilderness for forty years to humble them and test them. The purpose was to see whether they would keep His commandments or not. In Deuteronomy 8:16, it says that He tested them so that He could do good for them in the end. In Deuteronomy 13:3, God tested His people to see if they were going to love the Lord with all their heart and with all their soul. (In that particular case, He tested them with false prophets who encouraged them to worship other Gods.)

All of these tests had specific purposes. In our text today, God tested Abraham, and there was a specific purpose for the test. We know that it was a test because the first verse tells us that God tested Abraham. That is a key to understanding the passage. If we do not consider this a test, then it would be easy to form a wrong perception of who God is and draw wrong conclusions and applications from the passage. In our passage today, we will look at three things. First, we will look at the beginning of the test. Second, we will look at the Test in Progress, and Abraham's response. Third, we will look at the End of the Test.

Nothing Held Back

1. The Test Begins (Gen 22:1-2)
2. The Test In Progress (Gen 22:3-10)
3. The Test Ends (Gen 22:11-24)

1. The Test Begins (Gen 22:1-2)

(Gen 22:1-2) "Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." {2} He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."

God tested Abraham, but I do not think that God told him that He was just testing him. While I do not think that God told Abraham that he was testing him, I do believe that Abraham knew that God was testing Him. We will see in our text today that Abraham told Isaac that God would provide the sacrifice. I think that Abraham knew that God would provide and he was trusting God to provide. I also believe that if God did not provide, Abraham would have been obedient and followed through with God's command. Abraham fully trusted God and held nothing back.

God told Abraham to take his son, whom he loved, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering. This was the son that God had promised him. This was the son that Abraham and Sarah waited twenty-five years for. This was the son that he had in his old age, when his body was good as dead. This was the son that God supernaturally gave them. This was the son that God had told him that His covenant would be with him. This was the son that Abraham had celebrated his birth, his circumcision and the day that he had been weaned.

Abraham threw a big party on the day he was weaned. And now, God is asking him to take him on a mountain and offer him as a burnt offering. These things do not match or line up. I think that Abraham knew that God's covenant was going to pass down through Isaac. I think Abraham knew that God would provide a sacrificial lamb for him to offer. I think he knew it was a test.

I think that many times we are tested and we may not even know or recognize at first that we are being tested. How do you respond properly to a test? I think that we need to respond the proper way at all times, whether it is a test or not. Many years ago I wrote a booklet called, *Make Your Practice Productive*. One of the problems with the way people practice is they just go pound balls on the range. They don't take their time with each shot and go through the same pre-shot routine that they would use on the course. Then, they wonder why they hit it well in practice and poorly on the course. Practice makes repetition. If you want to play well on the course, you have to practice the same way you are going to play. If you practice properly, you will also test properly. If we are always obedient to God's voice, we will naturally pass any test that He gives us to see if we will obey His voice. If we only intend on obeying His voice when He tests us, there will be many times that we won't obey His voice. We have to obey His voice all the time.

2. The Test In Progress (Gen 22:3-10)

(Gen 22:3-10) "So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. {4} On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. {5} Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you." {6} Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. {7} Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" {8} Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together. {9} Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. {10} Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son."

Sometimes when we do something that we are less than excited about, we drag our feet. We take our time doing it. Even though God has told Abraham to sacrifice his son, he rose early in the morning and got started. I think this shows obedience with a joyful heart. He did not grudgingly comply; he joyfully obeyed.

After saddling his donkey, he took two young men and Isaac with him. He also split wood for the burn offering, and went to the place God told him. On the third day he saw the place from a distance. Then, he told the two young men to stay with the donkey and that he and Isaac would go worship and return to them. I like what it says, "WE will worship and return to you. I think that Abraham fully expected God to provide the offering for the sacrifice. While walking on together, Isaac asked his father where the lamb was for the burnt offering. Notice that Abraham said that God would provide for Himself the lamb. He did not tell Isaac that God had told him to offer him as the burnt offering. Abraham believed God would provide the offering.

When they came to the place, Abraham built the altar and arranged the wood, and bound his son and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. Then, he stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. This was the time of reckoning. It was time for God to come through. And, if God did not come through, Abraham was going to fully carry out God's command.

Before I preached this message, I shared a little bit about it with my mother. She said that Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac because he believed that God would raise him from the dead. We talked about that idea, and although it is not mentioned in Genesis, in Hebrews 11:17-19, God gives us a little more insight into Abraham's thinking at the time. Abraham "considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead." In other words, Abraham believed that if he put his son, Isaac, to death, God could raise him back to life and give him back to him. Abraham believed God would provide a sacrifice in place of Isaac, and if He didn't, God would raise Isaac from the dead. In either case, Abraham was going to be obedient and trust God. My mother was correct in what she had told me.

(Heb 11:17-19) "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; {18} it was he to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED." {19} He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

3. **The Test Ends** (Gen 22:11-24)

(Gen 22:11-19) "But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." {12} He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." {13} Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. {14} Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD it will be provided." {15} Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, {16} and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, {17} indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. {18} "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." {19} So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived at Beersheba."

And God did come through in the nick of time. He called out from heaven, "Abraham, Abraham, do not stretch out your hand against the lad." Earlier I mentioned a reaction drill that the drilling supervisors carry out. When he sees the driller respond and start to shut in the well, he stops the test and tells him that it was just a drill. God stops the test because He has seen that Abraham was going to be fully obedient.

Then God tells him the purpose of the test. He said, "For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." Abraham did not hold anything back from God. He was willing to give up anything and everything in his obedience to God.

I believe that Jesus taught the same message. In Luke 14:25-27, Jesus said that if anyone comes to Him and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Jesus was not telling people to hate their mother and father and family members. He was telling them that God had to be first in their lives. We have to love God above every other relationship in our lives. I may not like it, but I am second place in my wife's life. I want to be first, but God is first in her life. She may not like it, but she is second place in my life. God is first in my life. The good news is that because God is first in my life, He is helping me love my wife the way He loves her. I am a better husband to her because the Lord is first in my life. Karen is a better wife because God is first in her life.

(Luke 14:25-27) "Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, {26} 'If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. {27} Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.'"

In Matthew 19:16-22, a rich young man asked Jesus what he had to do to obtain eternal life. Jesus told Him to keep all the commandments. The young man then asked Jesus to specify which ones. Jesus did not start with the first commandment, He gave him the last few, which pertain to loving your neighbor. The young man said that he had kept all of these. I don't think the young man had the same standard as God, for no one has kept all of those commands except Jesus. Then, Jesus gave the young man the same test as God gave Abraham. He told the young man to go sell all his possessions, give it to the poor and then follow Him. But, the young man went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property. This young man was not like Abraham. Abraham did not hold anything back. This young man valued his possessions more than God. He failed the test. If this had been Abraham, he would have started selling the possessions early the next morning. But this young man went away grieving.

(Matt 19:16-22) "And someone came to Him and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?" {17} And He said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." {18} Then he said to Him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER; YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY; YOU SHALL NOT STEAL; YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS; {19} HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER; and YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." {20} The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?" {21} Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." {22} But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property."

The year after I received Christ into my life, I was in Huntsville, Texas playing in the Southwest Conference Championship. I was playing pretty good golf. In my practice round I shot a 70, which was two shots off of the course record. Waterwood National was the toughest golf course that I had ever seen. But, during the first round, I had a major test. God told me that I needed to love Him more than my golf. Ever since I had been about seven years of age, my life had been consumed with becoming a professional golfer. That was my dream. That was my passion. That was my life. When Karen met me, that was my life. After class I practiced. In the evenings before dark I practiced. On week-ends I practiced. I was pursuing my dream with passion. And

now, in the first round of the biggest tournament of the year, God was telling me to remove the idol of golf from my life and seek Him first. Why couldn't God choose some other time to work this out in me. I shot a 91 that day. From the time I was about seven or eight years old, that was the only round in the 90's that I ever shot. One year at the San Diego Open, we played in 70-mph winds. Over 30 PGA Tour players shot in the 90's that day. I shot a 76 and was in the top ten after the first round. In my last fourteen years as a professional, I never had a single round in the 80's. But on that day in Huntsville, Texas, I shot a 91. I was torn up on the inside because God was telling me to lay down that idol in my life. The good news is that I made God pre-imminent in my life that day. I made Him Lord, and I gave Him my golf to do what He wanted to do with it. I would only play golf if He wanted me to play. Many years later when I was in Florida, Joe Warner, pastor of Freedom Fellowship, and a good friend of mine said to me that I was different than all the other professional golfers at our church. Golf did not have a hold on me. I was free from it. He was right. I was free from golf and it was not an idol. God did a major work in my life that day at Waterwood National. Years later when the Lord told me to lay down golf and plant a church, it was very easy for me to do that.

On a side note, in the fall of 1979, the PGA Tour decided to have the PGA Tour Qualifying tournament or Q-School, at Waterwood National. I dreaded the place. Karen and I went there and stayed two weeks long before the tournament so that I could become very familiar with the course. My preparation paid off, and I successfully regained my PGA Tour Card and got back on the tour for the 1980 season.

After God stopped the test, Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and there was a ram caught in the thicket by his horns. He went and took the ram and offered him as the burnt offering in the place of his son. Then, he called the name of the place, Jehovah Jireh, which means The Lord Will Provide. God had provided the lamb for the sacrifice, just as he had told Isaac.

Then, God said that because he had not withheld his son, his only son, that He would greatly bless him and multiply his seed as the stars of the heavens and the sand on the seashore. He also said that his seed would possess the gate of their enemies, and that all the nations of the earth would be blessed in his seed. All of these blessings came about because Abraham obeyed His voice. Abraham had passed the test that God gave him. He held nothing back from God. Then, Abraham, Isaac, and the young men arose and went back to Beersheba, and Abraham lived at Beersheba.

Our text today ends today with a report from Abraham's brother, Nahor. He had eight children from his wife, Milcah, and four children from his concubine, Reumah. I believe the main reason that this text is given to us is to introduce us to Abraham's relatives, and in particular, Rebekah, who we will find out more in Genesis 24.

(Gen 22:20-24) "Now it came about after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, "Behold, Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: {21} Uz his firstborn and Buz his brother and Kemuel the father of Aram {22} and Chesed and Hazo and Pildash and Jidlaph and Bethuel." {23} Bethuel became the father of Rebekah; these eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. {24} His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore Tebah and Gaham and Tahash and Maacah."

Conclusion and Applications

As we come to a close this morning, there are two things that I want to bring up. First, the main idea of our passage today is that God tested Abraham to see if he would hold anything back. Abraham passed the test, and did not hold back his only son. God expects us to put Him first in our lives. We are not to hold back anything from Him. He is Lord.

Is there anything that you have not surrendered to the Lord? The rich young ruler was holding on to his possessions. It was an idol in his life that prevented him from following Jesus. For me, I had to turn over my golf to the Lord. God was not interested in taking away my golf. It was just the opposite. I surrendered my golf game to Him, and He gave it back to me. He allowed me to pursue my dream and play on the PGA Tour. God is not interested in taking things away from you. He is interested in being pre-imminent in your life. The first commandment is in Exodus 20:3, and it says, “You shall have no other gods before Me.” God wants first place in our lives. Is God first place in your life? Does your daytimer reflect that God is the highest priority in your life? Does your checkbook reflect that God is the highest priority in your life?

This morning, God wants to be Lord of your life. We are going to close this morning with a song from Philippians, *You Are Lord*. If there is anything in your life that is keeping Him from being Lord, I exhort you this morning to lay it down. Confess Jesus as your Lord, and don't hold anything back from Him.

The second and final thought that I want to end with is that God does not hold anything back from us. He tested Abraham to make sure that he would not hold back even his only son, Isaac. He asked Abraham to do something that He had already planned to do for us. He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to us as a sacrifice for our sins. God did not hold back anything. It says in John 3:16 that God did this because of His great love for us. It reads, “*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*” God does not hold anything back from us because He loves us.

In Romans 8:31-32, Paul wrote, “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? {32} He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” God is not trying to take things from us. He wants to freely give us all things. He had already demonstrated to us that He has not held back anything from us. It was an action that continually reminds us of His great love for us, and that He will not withhold anything from us.

Let's pray, and then we will close the service by sharing the Lord's Supper and singing, *You Are Lord*.

Introduction (Gen 22:1, Deut 6:16, Num 14:22, Ps 78:18, 78:41, Mal 3:10-11, Ex 15:25-26, 16:4, 20:20, Deut 8:2, 8:16, 13:3)

1. The Test Begins (Gen 22:1-2)

2. The Test In Progress (Gen 22:3-10, Heb 11:17-19)

3. The Test Ends (Gen 22:11-24, Luke 14:25-27, Matt 19:16-22)

Conclusion and Applications (John 3:16, Rom 8:31-32)